

## Mary Lou Terrien

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**From:** Works Associates <gworks@worksassociates.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 23, 2016 6:39 PM  
**To:** Mary Lou Terrien  
**Cc:** Rep. Chris Afendoulis (District 73); SenPMacGregor@senate.michigan.gov; SenDZorn@senate.michigan.gov; SenTSchuitmaker@senate.michigan.gov; Rep. Winnie Brinks (District 76); SenDHildenbrand@senate.mi.gov; Rep. Lee Chatfield (District 107); Rep. Amanda Price; Rep. Kurt Heise; Rep. David Maturen (District 63); Rep. Jim Runestad (District 44); Rep. Jason Sheppard (District 56); Rep. Lana Theis (District 42); Rep. Jeremy Moss (District 35); SenDZorn@senate.michigan.gov; SenJProos@senate.michigan.gov; SenJBrandenburg@senate.michigan.gov; SenTRocca@senate.michigan.gov; sencyoung@senate.michigan.gov; Rep. Charles Brunner; Rep. David Rutledge; Rep. Sheldon Neeley (District 34); contactmichigan@state.mi.us; Rhonda Baker  
**Subject:** Opposition to HB5232 & SB720

February 23, 2016

Please enter our opposition to HB5232 & SB720 in the public record, as we are unable to attend the hearing.

Cherry Hill is the hippest, hottest neighborhood in the city of Grand Rapids. We owe much of the progress from an extremely blighted and drug infested neighborhood in the late 1980s to our historic designation. A short version of our story is below. But this is important.

1. For our Cherry Hill revitalization project, the tipping point was in 1993 when received a **temporary designation** as a historic district while we completed the study and application process. With the large number of disinvested absentee landlords at that point we could not have met the proposed changes in this bill. And there are other neighborhoods in the same situation.
2. **Historic preservation continues to help us.** The success of our neighborhood has made us subject recently to wildly inappropriate redevelopment plans. Our historic status gave us the tools and opportunity to work with the developers on a plan more appropriate to the scale of our neighborhood.

**People saw (and continue to see) the historic designation as a positive.**

**It meant stability.**

**It meant protection.**

**It was welcomed.**

**Without the assistance of being a historic district we would not be such a successful and flourishing neighborhood of homes and businesses.**

**Why is there consideration for breaking something that works! Please stop this nonsense!**

**Any attempt to dilute the Act's standards, policies and procedures will unilaterally break the compact between these property owners and their communities and jeopardize millions, if not billions, of dollars of personal investment statewide**

When we began the Cherry Hill Revitalization project in 1989, it was all about saving our neighborhood. At this time, the 10 blocks making up our neighborhood contained about 150 houses. 29 were owner occupied, 10 were owned by neighbors. The remaining 73% were absentee owned. On one street, Charles, there were only 2 owner occupants on its two blocks. Vacant houses were all over, but that street had more empty houses than all the others, and more trouble than any of the others.

Our group of neighbors developed a plan to connect the empty and absentee owned houses with people who were looking for affordable housing and saving the beautiful but neglected historic homes.

As we moved forward with workshops and marketing the neighborhood, we realized that we were losing houses that were repairable, and house features such as porches that had an impact on the neighborhood as a whole. We took on the long and arduous process of historic designation and bringing all owners to the table. In the spring of 1993 we were given a 6 month temporary historic district designation.

And then we got an unexpected reward. The temporary designation turned out to be our tipping point, and we started selling houses like crazy – everyone who had been sitting on the fence now felt confident about buying. By January of 1994, we had facilitated the sale of 43 homes. Amazing! The new HD status also affected a few of the landlords who began seeing the value of these buildings and were saving them instead of abandoning them to demolition.

Having that temporary designation was critical to us – not only to attract new homeowners, but also to let property owners test out what the cost-benefit – and it has been proven time and again that being a historic district is a huge benefit – not only in our property values but also the confidence

People saw (and continue to see) the historic designation as a positive.

It meant stability.

It meant protection.

It was welcomed.

We are a beautiful and functional historic neighborhood. Please don't create harm here.

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